

ADDRESS
OF
HENRY L. WILLIAMS,
MAYOR OF
SALEM, MASS.,
* ON THE OCCASION OF
THE DEDICATION
OF THE
CITY HALL EXTENSION,
May 8, 1876,
WITH THE
Proceedings of the City Council.

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Sept. 23/10

CITY OF SALEM.

IN CITY COUNCIL,

SALEM, May 8, 1876.

The Committee on the extension of the City Hall, take pleasure in reporting the completion of the work put in their charge. More time has been taken on the work than we had expected, but the delay was caused mostly by changes and additions to the original plans, and improvements in the old part of the hall, not anticipated at the beginning. The original appropriation of \$16,000 was intended to cover the cost of the new building and fixtures, a new safe, and changes in the rooms of the City Clerk, and the Treasurer. Notwithstanding a large amount of "extras" which were put in to make the work more complete, the cost of the improvements will not be more than \$500 in excess of that appropriation. A further sum of \$7,000 was appropriated to cover the cost of furnishing and fitting the rooms and passage-ways, and for payment of land damages. The expenditures under this appropriation will be about \$7,500. A further appropriation of about \$1000 will be needed, making the whole cost of the improvements about \$24,000. The Committees of this and the past year have earnestly endeavored to secure the best results, as to convenience, durability, and economy, from the appropriations placed at their disposal, and we trust the City Council will be fully satisfied with the manner in which the Committee have dis-

charged the trust. The entire satisfaction expressed by the occupants of the various rooms, and by those of our citizens who have examined the building, is a gratifying evidence to the Committee that they did not ask for a useless expenditure, and that they were correct in their judgment that public necessity required the enlargement and improvement of the City Hall.

We have now a City Hall of which we need not be ashamed, and one, which, considering its moderate cost, for comfort and utility is superior to many which represent hundreds of thousands of dollars in some of our larger cities, and one which will meet all our requirements for the present century. The various rooms have been assigned as follows: On the first floor, south side, the Treasurer and Collector, Superintendent of Schools, Fire Department, Wenham Water Board, Committee Room; and on the north side, the City Clerk, Committee Room, Messenger and Janitor, Superintendent of Burials, Overseers of the Poor. On the second floor, (rear,) south side, Aldermen's room, Mayor's Private room, Street Commissioner and Committee on Accounts; on the north side, Committee Room, Board of Assessors. The Committee deem it advisable to make some changes in the Ordinance relating to the duties of the Messenger, and submit herewith an Ordinance in accordance with their views, and recommend its adoption.

For the Committee,

G. R. CHAPMAN, Chairman.

(The Ordinance above referred to, was subsequently adopted. See Record of Ordinances.)

IN MAYOR AND ALDERMEN,

SALEM, May 8, 1876.

ORDERED, that a message be sent to the Common Council, proposing a convention forthwith, for the purpose of listening to an address from His Honor the Mayor.

Adopted, and sent to the Common Council for information.

HENRY M. MEEK, Clerk.

IN COMMON COUNCIL, May 8, 1876.

Proposal acceded to.

E. N. WALTON, Clerk.

The two Boards thereupon met in convention, and the Mayor delivered the following address :

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL:

It seems to me appropriate, that the extension of the City Hall and its improvements, now just completed, should receive from us something more than a passing notice. I therefore ask your attention, while I present a brief statement of the reasons which have led to these improvements and additions.

The want of a properly constructed vault, of suitable size and strength for the preservation of the many important records and papers under the charge of the City Clerk, as required by the Statutes of the Commonwealth, was one of the reasons that early in 1875 demanded consideration; another, was the acknowledged necessity for more and better accommodations for the Officers of the City Government, and for the concentration of all of them, except the Police,

under the same roof. Before giving you a more definite account of the important and much desired changes that have been effected in this City Hall, I would ask your attention while I present some historical account of what has been done by our fathers in reference to Town and City accommodation for government officers since the settlement of Salem, two and one-half centuries ago. Such a sketch of our municipal history seems particularly appropriate in this centennial year. Tradition informs us that the first Town meetings, or gatherings of the inhabitants, were probably held in an old fort on the height of land in what is now Sewall Street, near the site of the Methodist Church. In this same fort Gov. Endicott and his Council were accustomed to assemble.

Prior to 1655, it is said, a building for Town Meetings was erected on the west side of what is now Washington Street, several rods south of Essex Street, and near or upon the estate now owned by Dr. Morse.

The next structure for Town purposes was built in 1674, southwest of the First Meeting House, and near the old Prison. Three years

afterwards this Town House was removed to School Street, occupying a position which would now be in the middle of Washington Street, opposite the estate of Robert Brookhouse, Esq., and facing to the south. From the increase in population and in the wants of the people, it soon became apparent that this house was entirely too small for their accommodation; and, on the 20th day of Feb'y, 1719, a vote was passed to erect a new building, 40 feet long by 30 feet wide, and 20 feet high,—the lower story to be used for Town purposes, and the upper or second story for Court or Judicial purposes. It was built on Essex Street, next westerly of the First Meeting-House, and was a painted building, said to have been white. The fact of its being painted caused it to be an object of much interest in those days, and attracted considerable notice. It was in front of this Town House, on benches or seats there placed, that the people were in the habit of congregating for the “news,” or spending their evenings discussing the topics of the day;—it was the “High 'Change” of the Town. In this hall scenes of the most thrilling and momentous character were enacted; here the most eloquent

appeals were made in the cause of freedom; here were vividly portrayed the wrongs forced upon our suffering countrymen; here, in 1774, on the 5th of October, the General Court having been convened at Salem, the Governor issued his proclamation dissolving the Assembly, but the Patriots assembled, chose, instead of separating, to resolve themselves into a Provincial Congress, the first session of which, so memorable in our history, was held in Salem in this same Town House, on Friday, the 7th day of October, 1774, John Hancock being chosen temporary chairman. The transferring of the Assembly from Boston to Salem, by the Governor, caused this Town House to be called the State House; so that this memorable building was at the same time the Town House, the Court House, and the State House. Should we not, gentlemen, as a grateful people, in this centennial year of our independence, bear in hallowed remembrance a building so dear to the cause of liberty, and place some distinguishing memorial near its location, that our children and our countrymen may know the spot where the building stood in which the

first move was made toward the establishment of government for this now great and powerful nation?

Let us do thus much in remembrance of our Fathers.

The last building erected for joint use by Town and County, was upon the site of an old brick school house that stood on what was then School, now Washington Street, directly opposite the Tabernacle Church, facing Essex Street. It was in its day a fine building, two stories high, sixty-two feet in length, by thirty-seven in width. It was completed in 1786, and cost \$7,045, one-half of which was paid by the Town, and the other half by the County; the cost of the previous hall had been divided in the same way. A fine representation of this building (which was designed by Mr. McIntire, an accomplished architect in his day,) may be seen at the Essex Institute. In 1817, the Town of Salem, having built for its own use exclusively a new Town Hall on Derby Square, sold its interest in the old one (on Washington, then Court Street,) to the County of Essex, for the sum of \$1800. This was the last building the Town and County owned

together for municipal and judicial purposes. It is probable that the Town Officers had their headquarters, and perhaps held some public meetings of the inhabitants, therein; but there are records also of many meetings being held in the First and the Tabernacle Meeting-Houses. We find in confirmation of this fact, that in 1809 a certain sum was charged in the accounts of that year for cleaning and repairing the "Tabernacle" after Town Meetings. In the earlier period of our history, the inhabitants took their arms and ammunition to meeting on the Sabbath, for protection in case of an attack from the savages.

These ancient structures were what their name imported—Meeting-Houses: they were used for all good purposes, both religious and secular, in which to worship Almighty God, and in which to discuss their domestic or their national interests, as their wants required.

The present Town Hall, much larger than any before built, was erected for the use of the inhabitants, for municipal purposes, upon Derby Square, in 1816-17. On the 20th of May, 1816, a committee was appointed, consisting of Samuel Putnam, Joseph Story, Joseph Ropes, and Gid-

eon Tucker, to consider and report at an adjourned meeting upon the expediency of building a Town Hall. On the 4th of the following month, they made a report in favor of building, and appointed a committee, consisting of Joseph Peabody, Joseph Ropes, Willard Peele, John Crowninshield, William P. Richardson, John Punchard, and Joseph Waters, to contract for its erection.

This Hall was one hundred feet long, forty feet wide, and two stories high, costing about \$12,000. The first public use of it was upon the occasion of President Monroe's visit to Salem, on the 8th of July, 1817, where he was introduced to the ladies and gentlemen assembled. That hall was the last used, as a Town Hall, under the Town government.

An Act incorporating the City of Salem having been passed March 23d, 1836, the City Government was organized in the Tabernacle Church on the 9th day of May following; and, after an address by the Mayor, the two boards retired to their own rooms in the Court House, which was formerly used as their Town House, but now occupied as a City Hall. On the 3d day of April,

1837, the Joint Standing Committee on Finance were instructed to see what steps were necessary to be taken for obtaining that portion of the Surplus Revenue of the United States, to which this City was entitled. At the same meeting, the Mayor, with Aldermen Peabody and Parsons, and Councilmen Putnam, Rogers, Shepard, and Russell, were made a committee to consider and report what measures were expedient to be taken to provide suitable accommodations for meetings of the Common Council, and for the convenience of the Officers of the Government, and to report the probable expense thereof. April 10, the same year, the City Council voted to accept the Report of the Finance Committee, to receive the amount of the City's share of the Surplus Revenue, under the Act of March 21, 1837.

May 19, the same year, the committee (of April 3d) upon the subject of a new City Hall, reported: It was expedient to purchase the estate on Court Street, which belonged to Josiah Orne, at a price not exceeding four thousand dollars, and also to erect a City Hall thereon; that a committee of five be appointed to make said purchase, and that they cause a brick building to be

erected thereon for the accommodation of the City Government, under their direction and superintendence, and that they cause the same to be completed and furnished as soon as they can conveniently; that they be authorized to contract for the same, and that the sum of fifteen thousand dollars of the moneys received from the Surplus Revenue be appropriated to defray the expense thereof, and that they be authorized to arrange with the Hon. Daniel A. White for an open way by the northerly side of said building, for light and air. March 5th, 1838, the Committee on Building the new City Hall recommend that the unexpended balance of the Surplus Revenue received from the State be appropriated for the completion of the City Hall and furnishing the same; and, on the 24th of May following, the Mayor, from the Committee on the new City Hall, reported that the meetings of the City Council be holden hereafter in the public building recently erected on Court Street, and that the said building be denominated the City Hall; that the next meeting of the City Council be holden on Thursday next, May 31st, at 8 P. M.

Conformably to the above vote, the City Council met in convention on the 31st day of May, 1838, at 8 o'clock in the evening, for the first time in the new City Hall, and listened to an address delivered by the Mayor upon that occasion. The City Hall was highly praised, as will be seen by the following account, published at the time of its completion, which says, "The interior finish and arrangements of the edifice correspond with its elegance of exterior, and for convenience, comfort and beauty, are unsurpassed by anything of the kind we have seen, and reflect great credit on the building committee, the architect, and workmen, engaged in the erection of this hall. It will be an enduring monument of their taste and skill, as well as a prominent ornament of our City."

The historian, Felt, in speaking upon the same subject, says, "Whatever other changes may come over it, imagination can furnish no probable advance in human inventions which may demand the spoiling of its fair proportions, and the subversion of its sturdy material." It will be remembered that the City Hall was paid for by the Surplus Revenue received under the Act of

March 21, 1837. It may be interesting, in this connection, to state from what source this Surplus Revenue came, that enabled us so easily to obtain a City Hall.

The proposition for the distribution of the Surplus Revenue, which amounted to about \$40,000,000, was introduced into the Senate of the United States, on the 31st of May, 1836, the same year and month that our City Government was first organized. The collection in the treasury of the United States, of a Surplus Revenue, was the result of accidental causes which might never happen again; there were two principal sources of income, viz., the Custom House and the Public Lands. The commerce of the country had been greatly extended, and its prosperity remarkable; the cotton crop of the country was exceedingly large, producing a large amount of freight for our ships; the heavy exports that were made brought back to us, in return, large importations of foreign goods, from which, under the then high protective tariff, the government received large amounts in duties.

The other cause mentioned was the sale of the Public Lands, from which there was at that time

a large increase of money in the treasury. The sales of that year, owing to the remarkable growth and prosperity of the country West, reached five times the amount estimated by the then Secretary of the Treasury, some twenty millions of dollars in the aggregate.

The price of the Western lands, and also of Southern cotton lands, compared with the prices of other kinds of property, was very low, excellent arable lands selling for one dollar and a quarter per acre. This was the first and the only distribution ever made of a Surplus Revenue from the Treasury of the United States.

After the distribution of this Revenue to the several States, which was made in proportion to their population, Massachusetts in turn distributed her share among the several municipalities within her borders. The total amount which Salem received of the Surplus Revenue, was \$33,843.49.

The contractors for building the City Hall, (which was 68 feet long by 41 1-2 feet wide, and 32 feet high, and which cost, completed and furnished, together with the land, \$22,878.69,) were Messrs. S. & A. Coburn, Masons; Clark & Brown,

Carpenters; Kimball & Skerry, Painters; James B. Ferguson, Glazier; Frothingham & Cross, Heating; Kimball & Sargent, Furniture.

And now, gentlemen, we have traced the history of our municipal accommodations from the earliest colonial times, down to this present improvement. As our ancestors, from the day of their earliest government, in accordance with the wants of the people, sought to improve the accommodations for their officers, so it becomes our duty, in this our day, to meet the requirements of the time, and provide such apartments and conveniences as an intelligent and liberal constituency would cheerfully approve. As we have nothing in our past history to discourage, and have much in our present condition and prospects to animate us, I may express the fervent hope that while we, and our children in ages to come, shall continue to assemble in these hallowed places, to deliberate upon the important and interesting questions that will arise, we may do so in an intelligent, upright, and patriotic spirit. In turning our thoughts back over the space of time, since the erection of this Hall, what a history has

been made up; what extraordinary changes have been wrought, in our common country, and in our ancient city! Look at the advance in Natural History, and the deep explorations in all its branches. In Geology, what most wonderful results have been reached! In Electricity and in Chemistry, what most valuable discoveries have been made, the one substantially annihilating time and distance, and the other conquering and destroying the power of pain!

The vast progress in Science, and its application to the wants of ordinary life in this country, since the erection of this City Hall, thirty-eight years ago, is equal to that made in any similar period in all the world beside. The first telegraphic line, that between Baltimore and Washington, was raised six years after this hall was built, and now a net work of such wires covers the length and breadth of the land. Then it took seventy-two hours to send a message by express rider from Boston to Washington; now but a few minutes are required.

It will be observed that the original City Hall was dedicated in the thirty-eighth year of the present century, and now, just thirty-eight years

thereafter, we find it necessary to double its original capacity.

On the 23d of March, 1874, the extension of the City Hall was first brought to the notice of the Government, on the part of the Board of Aldermen. Messrs. Luscomb, Ide, and Smith, were made a committee upon that subject; but at the next meeting of the City Council, April 13, the Common Council refused to concur, thereby defeating the project for that year. The next year, July 12th, a Joint Special Committee, consisting of Messrs. Chapman and Ide, from the Board of Aldermen, and Messrs. Brooks, Davis, and Brown, from the Common Council, were appointed to consider the expediency and estimate the cost of providing better accommodations for the officers and for the safe keeping of the books and papers in the custody of the City Clerk, within the requirements of the Statute. The following month (Aug. 26,) Alderman Chapman, from the Committee on the Extension, made a very full and interesting report upon the matter, the recommendations in which were adopted by a nearly unanimous vote of both branches.

On the 31st of August, the land in the rear of

the Hall, belonging to Mr. Thurston, was taken under the Statute for the Enlargement of City Hall lots; and the same evening it was voted that the expense of the "extension" be paid from the taxes of 1875 and 1876.

January 3d, 1876, a Joint Special Committee, consisting of Aldermen Chapman and Brooks, and Councilmen Davis, Getchell and Fowler, was appointed, under whose charge the City Hall was to be completed. No action of the City Council, involving so large an expenditure of money, has ever received more general approbation from the people than this improvement.

We have often, without doubt, heard the statement, that our pleasant and honored city "has kept along at about the same old pace," that "there is not much change," certainly not much for the better; but believing that figures may change these views, I respectfully submit for your consideration the following statement of the amount of business transacted thirty-eight years ago in this City Hall, as well as that which is done at the present time, in order that you may realize the change and increase of business in this city, which, to say the least, has not been

checked in her growth and prosperity, and it will I think convince our fellow citizens that more and better accommodations were needed than those afforded by the original portion of this City Hall.

The population of our city has increased, since this Hall was built thirty-eight years ago, from 15,000 to 26,000; the valuation of taxable property from \$8,000,000 to \$26,000,000; receipts by the Treasurer, from \$63,000 to \$800,000; payments, from \$66,000 to \$805,000; items, in number, paid by the Treasurer during the year, from 654 to 7,008; tax levied, \$44,000 to \$452,000; interest, from \$1,700 to \$92,000. City debt, \$37,000 at commencement of City Government, to \$1,267,000 at the present time.

The commercial character of our city, it is true, has changed essentially from what it was thirty-eight years ago. The time was when Salem stood sixth in rank among the commercial places in America. Thirty-eight years ago Salem ships floated on every sea, and brought to our wharves the products of every clime,—this being their home and where many of them were built; their repairs and their outfits gave to the

seaside of Salem a lively and a business-like appearance.

For a long series of years the East India trade was carried on from here to a greater extent than from any other port in the United States. Now has come the change. The building of the railroad and the telegraph has swept from the smaller ports in our country to its great commercial centres, the foreign trade that they formerly enjoyed.

This change has caused an almost entire disappearance from our harbor of Salem ships, but we have, in their place, an important provincial and coastwise traffic, employing, as will be seen by the following facts obtained from the Custom House records, about double the amount of tonnage of thirty-eight years ago.

In 1838, there arrived at Salem, from foreign and coastwise ports, vessels measuring about 120,000 tons. In the year ending April, 1872, there arrived 249,216 tons, and last year (since the change in the Reciprocity Treaty,) only 150,098 tons; the number of vessels falling off from 1812 in the year ending April, 1872, to 1197 vessels in the year 1875,—about one-third part.

Salem has ever been strong in the wisdom and patriotism of her eminent public men, prominent among whom was the first Mayor of this city, the Hon. Leverett Saltonstall.

Thirty-eight years ago this month, here on this spot, he addressed the City Council, assembled upon the occasion of the dedication of this City Hall for municipal purposes. The City Government had now taken the place of the old Town Government, not because the old Town Government had not been well administered, but because the City Government had become better adapted to the wants and interests of our population. And we are here this evening to dedicate to public uses, the extension which has now been well completed. The City Hall has been increased in length fifty-five feet, and is of the same width and height as the original building. In its interior arrangements it is convenient and beautiful, and furnished with much care and taste, with a due regard to usefulness and durability. To the Joint Special Committee, who have had this work in charge, and who have so well and so faithfully fulfilled their trust, the

thanks of this Council, I am sure, will be heartily given.

To the architect, William Washburne, Esq., of Boston, much credit is due for the practical and excellent plan prepared by him, and which has been so well carried out by our enterprising fellow-citizens and able master mechanics, as follows: The Masonry, by Messrs. J. H. & J. M. Parsons; the Carpenters' work by Messrs. Reed & Lord; the Painting by Mr. C. H. Davis; Frescoing by Mr. B. Rowell; Gas Fittings by Mr. D. F. Staten; Heating by Messrs. J. D. & J. W. Eaton; and Furniture by Messrs. Haskell & Saunders. The total cost of the extension of the City Hall,—together with the new vaults, and improvements and alterations in the offices of the City Clerk and City Treasurer,—with the cost, also, of the land taken in the rear of the original building, and of the complete furnishing of the several rooms, amounts to very nearly twenty-four thousand dollars.

I have thus endeavored to present to you, an historical sketch of our municipal accommodations, with a record of the names of those who

took an active part, either in the projection or completion, of some of the more recent structures.

And now, gentlemen, I take leave of the pleasant duty which I proposed to perform this evening, and I heartily congratulate you, as well as myself, that we have been permitted to witness the completion, and be present at the dedication to their appropriate uses, of the rooms allotted to the various departments of this city, for the better accommodation of its officers, and the safety of its records and valuable papers.

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